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## China Shows Confidence in Its Missiles

**C**hina claims to have so many nuclear weapons squirreled away that it no longer fears the massive Soviet missile force arrayed against it. At least two—probably four—of China's long-range missiles are also capable of hitting the United States.

Peking's confidence (or at least its attempt to appear confident) in its ability to strike back is stated most plainly in a secret Defense Intelligence Agency report seen by my associate Dale Van Atta.

It quotes a high-level Chinese defense official as saying in a private conversation that "the Soviet Union no longer had a first-strike capability against China because the Chinese nuclear arsenal is so well-hidden that it ensures sufficient retaliatory capability to inflict intolerable damage to the U.S.S.R."

The DIA deduced from the official's statement that Chinese nuclear security depends on hiding its missiles rather than hardening the missile silos. The remarks "indicate that sufficient sites remain undetected," the report states, adding:

"While his remarks could be based on misinformation, China presumably is aware of published Western estimates of the size of its missile force and may have found such estimates to be low. On the other hand, the published figures may accurately reflect the size of China's force, and [his] remarks could be interpreted to mislead potential enemies. The latter assumption is less likely, since the Soviets would be the primary target of such disinformation, but probably would not be aware of his remarks."

The secret report continues: "Only one national stockpile site and no regional sites have been observed in China. Thus, if nuclear weapons for air delivery are deployed to air bases, they have been effectively hidden. Most of the detected missile sites in China are hardened, but a number of sites consist of unhardened buildings."

In addition to the two to four intercontinental ballistic missiles, the Chinese have as many as 10 other long-range missiles, anywhere from 85 to 125 intermediate-range missiles and 40 to 60 short-range models, according to Pentagon reports.

Another conversational "slip"—this one to a visiting French delegation—indicated that Peking is slowly building a supply of tactical nuclear weapons for air and artillery delivery. According to the DIA report, another Chinese defense official disclosed "that China has no tactical nuclear weapons deployed at 'ground division level or below.' He was interrupted by [a subordinate] who said that information was beyond the scope of the discussion."

The DIA's expert pointed out that this statement and others "do not deny that such weapons as atomic demolition munitions may be held at higher echelons." The DIA report adds: "Some tests of low-yield devices during the 1970s suggest that China sought to develop tactical nuclear weapons and that some are now available for delivery. China may also be trying to develop artillery-delivered nuclear weapons, but it is unlikely nuclear artillery rounds would be available before the end of this decade."